

LYSA HESLOV

Lysa Heslov is the Founder & Executive Director of Children Mending Hearts, a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering disadvantaged youth in the US, by connecting them with an international community of children in need, through educational and arts programs that build empathy and global citizenry.

After growing up in Savannah, GA, Lysa moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in the film industry. After establishing herself as a successful independent film producer, her circumstances began to drive her in a new direction.

In 2005, after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, Lysa and her husband opened their home to a family that had lost everything in the storm. For five months the families co-existed, offering her a new way to look at her life, and eventually a new career. Soon after, the death of her best friend and sister-in-law inspired Lysa to raise over \$40,000 for cancer research, firmly establishing herself as a working philanthropist and true humanitarian.

By 2007, Lysa's efforts had become more focused and she participated in an aid trip to Darfur's refugee camps. Her experience in seeing first-hand the devastating effects of genocide and poverty inspired her to create her organization, Children Mending Hearts. With a goal of empowering at-risk children in the United States by connecting them with global communities of other children suffering from similar, and often worse, circumstances, including conflict, disaster and/or extreme economic deprivation, CMH uses educational and artistic programs to facilitate a new world view, one without borders, motivated by empathy and a desire for peace.

Since then, Lysa has traveled to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Darfur, Kenya, Rwanda, Haiti and several cities in the U.S., leading a team of professionals to implement the CMH Global Arts Exchange Workshops

In 2012, Lysa facilitated the launch of a new program - CMH Global Arts After School. In addition to connecting children across the planet through shared projects and exchanges, the program focuses on enriching students in the U.S. with focused arts learning, awareness about specific countries, and empathy-based social skills.

In the past three years alone, Lysa and CMH has reached over 10,000 children. Her philosophy of connecting children with their peers extends to other charities, including After-School All-Stars, Watts-Willowbrook Boys & Girls

Club, Ben Affleck's Eastern Congo Initiative, Children Uniting Nations, LA's Best, CoachArt, Sean Penn's J/P HRO, Artists for Peace & Justice, International Medical Corps and Women For Women International.

Lysa is currently studying for her Masters in Child Development, and seeking new opportunities to expand her message. She and her husband, writer/director/producer and Academy Award winner, Grant Heslov, have two children of their own.